



## **For Immediate Release:**

### **VinCare Services of Austin to Triple Housing for Homeless Families**

#### **Financial support from the City of Austin & local community helps Austin-based nonprofit triple its capacity to house and support homeless women with children**

**Austin, Texas, April 16, 2008** – VinCare Services of Austin, a local nonprofit providing transitional housing and supportive services to homeless families, announces the availability of 22 new housing units in South Austin.

VinCare aims to expand its St. Louise House (SLH) program from a community of 11 families to a community of 33 families by December of 2009. General Obligation bond funding was approved by the City Council last week to fund the purchase of a 24-unit South Austin apartment complex.

"Our partnership with VinCare is a direct example where we were able to address a need through a collaborative initiative. The City considers it a win to be able to get much-needed funding in the hands of those who already have direct programs in place to assist the homeless community," said Margaret Shaw, acting director for the City of Austin Neighborhood Housing and Community Department. "The St. Louise House (SLH) program makes it possible to provide additional families the help they need to move them one step closer to self-sufficiency."

"After nearly a decade of service to Austin's families, VinCare is deeply grateful for this opportunity" said Sharon Bieser, Executive Director, VinCare Services of Austin. "We have always opened our doors to single women with children, regardless of the circumstances for their situation. The families at SLH are all ages, all ethnicities, all religions and all backgrounds. What they have in common is the need for a home in which to heal and grow."

During 2007, SLH provided transitional housing to 21 female-headed families, including 35 children. Since the program's beginning in 2001, nearly 90 percent of its 60 program graduates have transitioned to permanent stable living situations. Additionally, St. Louise House mothers receive high school GEDs, attend college and vocational schools, reduce debt, resolve legal issues, and secure employment. Obtaining healthcare access for mothers and children is also a significant component of the St. Louise House program.

The Community Action Network's (CAN) October 2007 Homeless FAQ reports that in Austin there are 4,000 individuals who lack housing on any given night. CAN reports that nationally 40 percent – nearly half of the homeless population- are families with children.

"The City is proud to partner with VinCare Services of Austin to provide funding for the expansion of the St. Louise House in South Austin," said Austin Mayor Pro Tem Betty Dunkerley. "It's important that we continue to look for ways to geographically disperse affordable housing in our community. The Council is committed to continue to prioritize this issue, as evident with Council's recent support to use General Obligation bonds to identify future projects where we gain and preserve our affordable housing stock."

For more information about VinCare and its St. Louise House program please visit [www.vincare.org](http://www.vincare.org).

**Media Contact: For interviews with SLH staff, a program graduate, or additional information contact Sharon Bieser, Executive Director at (512) 302-0027 or (512) 785-7134.**